# Social capital and refugee children: does it help their integration and education in Scottish schools?

Smyth, Geri; MacBride, George; Paton, Grace; Sheridan, Nathalie

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

**Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:**
Verlag Barbara Budrich

# Social Capital and Refugee Children: Does it Help Their Integration and Education in Scottish Schools?

*Geri Smyth, George MacBride, Grace Paton, Nathalie Sheridan*


Geri Smyth


George MacBride


Grace Paton


Nathalie Sheridan

**Abstract**
The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act led to the dispersal of asylum seekers around Britain, with Glasgow City Council the only local authority in Scotland who agreed to house and support asylum seekers. The *Glasgow* Asylum Seekers' Support Project (GASSP) was established with funding from the Home Office National Asylum Seekers' Support (NASS) fund to provide housing, social work and education services for the asylum seekers in Glasgow. One result of this was the establishment of GASSP Units in 27 Glasgow schools. Research by *Smyth* (2006) into the perspectives of pupils in the *GASSP* units had observed a number of social capital building strategies used, albeit unconsciously, by both staff and pupils to enable integration of the refugee pupils into the mainstream school. Within the Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS) network on social capital it was decided to fund a small scale case study to further explore this phenomenon. The aim of the case study was to investigate if and how teachers and pupils understood social capital; how it was interpreted in schools and if it impacted on their networks outside the school and on their families. The investigation involved three researchers conducting fieldwork in one primary and one secondary school in Scotland. Qualitative methodology was employed including analysis of policy documents; interviews and conversations with school staff and pupils; fieldwork in school observing teaching and learning situations and social situations. Pupil voice played a major part in the data collected, including photographic evidence collected by pupils themselves. The research found that teachers had clear aims to help the refugee pupils build social networks. While not necessarily using the term social capital they were certainly making use of a range of practices which built bonding social capital. In exploring the associated concepts with pupils we found an understanding of the importance of friendship and trust, the importance of cultural capital and some of the barriers to building bridging social capital. We were unable to establish clear evidence about the transferability of social capital outside the school setting.

*Keywords*: Social Capital, young refugees, schooling, Scotland

*Sozialkapital und Flüchtlingskinder: Unterstützt es deren Integration und Bildung in schottischen Schulen?*

**Zusammenfassung**
Während der 1999 erlassene Immigration and Asylum Act zur landesweiten Verteilung von Asylbewerbern in Großbritannien führte, war Glasgow die einzige Stadt in Schottland, die zustimmte, Asylbewerber zu beherbergen und zu unterstützen. In diesem Zusammenhang wurde das Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project (GASSP) ins Leben gerufen. Als Teil dieses Projektes wurden an 27 Glasgower Schulen spezifische Fördermaßnahmen für Kinder und Jugendliche eingeführt. Eine frühere Studie von Smyth (2006) zeigte, dass sowohl Lehrerinnen wie auch Schülerinnen – wenngleich auch unbewusst – Sozialkapital-Strategien nutzten, um die Integration der Flüchtlingskinder in die Schule zu fördern. Auf der Basis einer tiefergehenden Fallstudie soll dieses Phänomen im vorliegenden Beitrag weiter untersucht werden. Dabei zielt die Fallanalyse u.a. auf die Frage, was Lehrerinnen und Schülerinnen unter sozialem Kapital verstehen und inwieweit sich die Verfügung über soziales Kapital der Schüler auf das Leben außerhalb der Schule und in den Familien auswirkt. Durchgeführt wurde die Studie in einer Primarschule und einer Schule der Sekundarstufe in Schottland. Im Rahmen der Datenerhebung wurden eine quantitative Inhaltsanalyse, Interviews und Gespräche mit dem Schulpersonal und den Schülerinnen und Schülern, sowie eine teilnehmende Beobachtung an den Schulen durchgeführt. Eine besondere Rolle bei der Datenerhebung kam der Sichtweise der Schülerinnen und Schüler zu. Dies schloss beispielsweise Fotointerviews mit den Schülern ein. Die Forschungsergebnisse zeigen, dass die Lehrerinnen und Lehrer deutlich darauf abzielen, die sozialen Netzwerke der Flüchtlingskinder aufzubauen und zu stärken. Wenngleich sie dabei zur Beschreibung ihrer Strategien nicht notwendigerweise den Begriff des sozialen Kapitals verwenden, zeigen sie Handlungsstrategien, die das zu stärken versuchen, was wir als „bonding social capital" bezeichnen. Auf Seiten der Schüler und Schülerinnen konnten wir zeigen, welche bedeutende Rolle Freundschaft und Vertrauen, sowie kulturelles Kapital spielen, sowie, welche Faktoren dem Aufbau von sozialem Kapital, das wir als „bridging social capital" bezeichnen, entgegenstehen. Dabei konnten wir jedoch keinen klaren Hinweis für den Transfer von Sozialkapital in außerschulische Bereiche finden.

*Stichworte:* Sozialkapital, junge Flüchtlinge, Schule, Schottland

## 1 Introduction: Refugee young people and social capital

In this article the term 'refugee' applies to those children who have arrived in Britain, with or without their families, seeking refuge under the terms of the 1951 UN Convention on refugees. This does not differentiate between those whose families have been granted refugee status and those who are still awaiting a Home Office decision regarding their case. *Stead/Closs/Arshad* (1999) also adopted this terminology. In UK Home Office legislation a refugee is a person, who, as a result of their asylum application, has either been awarded Exceptional Leave to Remain,[1] or Convention status.[2] An asylum seeker is a person who has applied to the Home Office for Refugee status. However the case study reported here is focused on children and under the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child *There is educational entitlement for all children, no matter their legal status*.

The 1999 UK Immigration and Asylum Act led to the dispersal of asylum seekers around Britain, with Glasgow City Council the only local authority in Scotland who agreed to accept asylum seekers. The Glasgow Asylum Seekers' Support Project (GASSP) was established through the Home Office National Asylum Seekers' Support fund to provide housing, social work and education services for asylum seekers in Glasgow. One result of this was the establishment of GASSP Units in 27 Glasgow schools. Additional teaching staff were employed in these schools to support the pupils, who were enrolled in mainstream classes but attended the units some of the time. The

focus in the GASSP units is preparation of the children for the language, curriculum and culture of mainstream education in Scottish schools.

*Rutter* (2006), who also uses the generic term refugee regardless of legal status, writes of the refugee pupil identikit as being unannounced, traumatised, transient and insecure with no choice, no support and little cash. This identikit is in contrast with the situation of other pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture or language. It is axiomatic that within a given community with refugees there is a great deal of heterogeneity, but needs and problems that manifest themselves for significant numbers of refugee children may include: interrupted education in the country of origin; horrific experiences in their home countries and during their flight to the UK; families who experience a drop in their standard of living and status in society; loss of parents; families who do not know their legal and social rights in the UK and speaking little or no English on arrival in the UK. Those providing services for refugee children and aiming at integration of such children must consider these needs. The Home Office *Integration matters* report (cf. *Ager/Strang* 2004) includes social connections as one of the four indicators of refugee integration, and uses the terms bonding, bridging and linking networks. The term integration is itself contested and in common sense parlance is often assumed to mean that the immigrant becomes unnoticed and indeed loses their sense of self. *Castles* et al (2002) reviewed the literature in relation to refugee integration and argue that *minority groups should be supported in maintaining their cultural and social identities.* It is essential that those working with refugee children consider how the child establishes a relationship with their new external world and makes social connections, while being encouraged to maintain their own cultural identities. *DES* (2006) recognises the importance of these issues and argues that *Primary and Secondary schools play a vital role in ensuring the integration of refugee children and families into the wider community. Developing support for refugee children is a whole-school responsibility.* It is necessary to consider if schools actively pursue the making of social connections for refugee children as part of their agenda and how durable and transferable any such connections are. It is also important to consider if social capital practices in schools aim to create a homogenised melting pot where individual identities are squashed or a heterogeneous school community where diversity is the mainstream.

*Smyth's* (2006) research into the perspectives of refugee pupils in the GASSP units had observed a number of social capital building strategies being used by both staff and pupils to enable integration of the refugee pupils into the mainstream school. It was deemed appropriate to pursue the use of social capital with refugee pupils in subsequent research, as reported here. The aim of the research reported in this article was to investigate if and how teachers and the pupils understood social capital, how it was interpreted in schools and if it impacted on the refugee pupils' networks outwith the school and on their families' networks.

In considering social capital in schools it is useful to refer to three of the principal theorists of social capital, *Bourdieu*, *Coleman* and *Putnam*. *Bourdieu* (1986) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition … The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected." What is of note here is the connection between social capitals and other capitals. *Coleman* (1994) states that "Social capital is

defined by its function, it is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure." *Putnam* (1996) writes "by social capital I mean features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives".

In each of these cases social capital is seen as located and acting within the relationships of human society. Social capital does not inhere within a single individual but can only exist within a pattern of relationships. Within these relationships there is a scale of bonding, linking and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital exists in the connections between individuals with similar characteristics and has value in the promotion of solidarity between people sharing values. While social capital is generally seen as positive there is evidence that bonding social capital can in certain situations have negative social impacts (e.g. within a territorial gang). Bridging social capital occurs when people from different groups come together while linking social capital exists in the connections between individuals who have different amounts of power and is often associated with a move into a new social context. Social capital results from or is a feature of networks of social relations that are characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity but also by the realisation of these norms. Discussion of social capital has often been conducted in terms of the benefits to society with its existence viewed as a prerequisite for sustaining civil society in its capacity to deal with challenges and problems and an important resource in supporting collective action. But it is also implicit in this conceptualisation that the possession of social capital, especially bridging social capital, benefits the possessor. This study aimed to investigate the development and sustainability of social capital for refugee children being educated in Scottish schools.

Previous studies of social capital among young people have been concerned with what is brought to school by young people and this has been measured by means of a narrow range of indicators, such as family structure, parent-teen discussion, or interaction with adults outside the family (cf. *Furstenberg/Hughes* 1995; *Yan* 1999). These studies ignore the potential of schools themselves as sites for the production of social capital among learners. These studies also ignore the active role that learners play in forming their own social capital. Additionally, they ignored opportunities to form social capital and to learn beyond the school. This research therefore set out to ask the following questions:

- Do the schools intentionally operate to develop social capital amongst their pupils from refugee families?
- What forms of social capital are important within the school setting?
- Do other capitals, particularly cultural and economic capitals, operate and interact with social capital development in the school setting?

## 2 Methodology

The research was one of ten case studies conducted by the Schools and Social Capital network of the Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS).[3] Three researchers were involved in two sites, a primary and a secondary school in Glasgow with *GASSP* units. Qualitative methodology was employed including analysis of policy documents;

interviews and conversations with school staff and pupils; fieldwork in school observing teaching, learning and social situations. Pupil voice played a major part in the data collected, including photographic evidence collected by pupils themselves. Observations and fieldnotes taken in school formed the basis of subsequent interviews. Digital cameras were used in an attempt to give the children power over what they showed the researchers. Photography also increased the possibility for children with limited English to have a voice in the research. In the primary school a total of twelve pupils were chosen to be involved: four from primary 6 and eight from primary 7.[4] All of these pupils were from refugee families and all were socially fluent in English. The pupils came from a range of linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds. The head teacher controlled the selection of pupils although it was unclear if this involved discussion with the class teachers or pupils. The two researchers met the pupils as a group and discussed with them the purposes of the research. They ensured that parental and child consent forms were completed and explained to the children the methodology, including practical instructions in the use of the cameras. All school staff involved appeared to participate willingly though it must be borne in mind that they were members of a group preselected by the head teacher.

The pupils were asked to take photographs of areas, items or events within the school and its immediate environment that seemed to them to be important, interesting or significant. The photos were used as a stimulus for individual discussions with the pupils, which were recorded and transcribed. The interviews opened up the researchers' insights to the development of social capital among the children. Two periods of observation were conducted in each of the classes involved and field notes were used to initiate discussions with the teachers about what had been observed and the means by which social capital was developed, consciously or otherwise. Observations were also conducted in the dining hall and the playground and key points arising were discussed with the Principal Teacher who had day to day responsibility for managing the research project in the school. School management were interviewed and the transcripts supplied to them for final consideration. The researchers were more successful in obtaining teachers' voice rather than children's voice. Not all members of staff were involved in the research and the views of these staff are not known. However the methods selected for use with confident adult participants appeared to allow expression of views without inhibition.

In the secondary school the researcher made nine visits and conducted fieldwork in two mainstream classes and in the GASSP Unit. A lunchtime photo club was established by one of the teachers involving twelve pupils, four of whom gave consent to use their pictures for the research. A total of 39 pupils were involved in the photo club, ten of whom were refugees. The main instrument in the secondary school was participant observation which led to a series of informal interviews or conversations, most of which were noted during or right after the conversation and a series of field notes. Within the photo club, the researcher established eight topics around which the children took pictures. The taking of pictures was a method used to indicate spaces and objects of significance. In subsequent interviews the children explained why they had taken these pictures which gave insight into their networks.

## 3 Constraints of the research

The research operated on a small budget and this restricted the resources available, in terms of equipment and researcher time. This in turn impacted on the effectiveness of obtaining authentic children's voice. There was greater staff involvement and less independent decision-making by the children than was planned by the researchers. Given more time, and more uncontrolled access to the schools, it would have been valuable to spend more time with the teachers and pupils involving them in the planning of the research (cf. *Jones* 2004). This would have helped the children have a better understanding of what the research was setting out to explore and would have avoided the syndrome referred to by *Morrow* (2005) as "informed dissent". The complexity of seeking children's voice was further illustrated by the conversations that were held with the children about the photographs taken. The domain (cf. *Mayall* 2002) of the school environment may have suggested to the pupils that they had a loyality to the school, which may have influenced the conversations. The organisational arrangements where adults controlled the use of cameras, removed active agency from the pupils to some extent, restricting the subject range of the photographs. The restricted timescale of a case study meant a lack of familiarity between the researchers and the pupils, which resulted in rather limited conversations. Although this data was useful, richer data could have been obtained by having had direct access and ability to shadow pupils who used the GASSP Unit in a longer term ethnographic study. Focus group discussions with children in primary 7 (the final stage of primary school) allowed more uninhibited discussion than the individual interviews. The pupils voiced positive aspects and some criticism of the school. The school agreed to follow-up the focus group using tapes to allow pupils to express individual views. This enabled triangulation to take account of peer pressure and cognitive, linguistic and affective skills (cf. *Scott* 2006) but was perhaps limited by being mediated by a teacher rather than a researcher.

The situation in the secondary school changed significantly between the initial negotiations and the actual research as the head teacher who had agreed to the research project and under whom the school had won a number of awards for inclusion retired in the interim. In addition a number of the refugee families, on gaining refugee status, had moved from the school's catchment area and from the school.

## 4 Findings and discussion

*John Field* (2003) argues that the central thesis of social capital theory is that "relationships matter"**.** The demands of these relationships and networks can be understood in terms of reciprocity. When one conforms to the *cluster of norms, values and expectations and sanctions* which *Halpern* (2005) defines as components for forms of social capital, the person can gain the advantages of the social network(s) they inhabit. The interview and field note data collected was analysed by the team to discern evidence of these underlying themes related to Social Capital. Categories were found related to relationships and networks, norms and values and reciprocity. Further analysis of the relationship and network theme allowed us to analyse the data for the existence of bonding, bridging and linking social capital, indicated as important by *Ager/Strang* (2004).

Norms and values seemed to be negotiated throughout a school day, implying certain sets of behaviour and meaning but also seeming to characterise the school network. Pupils needed to know the rules and norms of the particular network to be able to inhabit it and to negotiate relationships within it. Initially some of the indicators of norms and values appeared to be insignificant such as this fieldnote example from the secondary school:

> All the children share only a couple of erasers. This leads to permanent negotiation about the whereabouts of the eraser, but also induces cooperation since the children all depend on the use of this 'tool'. It seems to be a natural process and no one questions the sharing, there are no fights about who has the eraser first. If one pupil needs an eraser, and another pupil close by is using it, the children from the other end of the room would just give theirs. (Secondary Fieldnotes, 29th Feb 2008)

A closer analysis of the fieldnotes showed there is a set of rules that apply during class. It was particularly noticeable in this classroom where discipline and power struggles seemed to dominate teaching and learning. When sharing the erasers however the pupils apparently ran a script of mutual agreement and reciprocity. Observed discussions also indicated an awareness of societal sets of norms. During one math's lesson a discussion about racism started, in reference to a recent incident during a TV programme. The children appeared to have a conception of racism being wrong but sought the teacher's opinion. Another class discussion indicated the insecurity of the pupils about the issue of homosexuality, and indicated awareness of the societal norm of acceptance towards homosexuality. Being in their late teens and influenced by peers and parents it was obvious they were not comfortable with the topic and tried to negotiate a way to deal with it through the teacher. The factual response of the teacher to their concerns, his neutral voice and his body-language established a norm for responses to homosexuality, at least within that environment. The significance of an individual for the negotiation of norms and values is undeniable. Some of the participating children might never have been exposed to discussions about homosexuality outwith the school context, thus the reaction of the teacher was of particular importance.

It has been argued that the existence of social capital is a prerequisite for sustaining civil society in its capacity to deal with challenges and problems. Thus, social capital can be a resource to collective action. But it is also implicit in this that the possession of social capital, especially bridging social capital, also benefits the possessor. Social capital is not always developed by way of negotiating norms and values. Sometimes the introduction or building of social capital takes place in small practical steps. In the secondary school one of the refugee children had problems opening a bank account although he had money and was of an age where this should not be a problem. Only when one of the GASSP teachers came with him was the bank willing to open the account. This is an example of the direct impact of bridging social capital onto the economic situation of a person, but also demonstrates the specific needs of refugee children for such bridges.

The frequent use of economic metaphors in the social capital literature suggests that social capital is a form of resource, which can be used or drawn upon. Thus, rather than being a feature of social life marked by reciprocity, individuals can exploit their social capital for their own ends. Any definition of social capital must recognise this dual aspect and must also recognise the implications of social inequality. The development of linking social capital may permit the owner to challenge inequality. However development of linking social capital for a few may act as a means of avoiding confrontation with inequality.

The concept of cultural capital, particularly in reference to social capital as a means for gaining cultural capital, also merits discussion here. It can be difficult to distinguish between cultural capital and social capital concepts since they are so interwoven but it is worth considering whether refugee families have any cultural capital in Glasgow and if the school helps to develop cultural capital. Does the cultural knowledge brought to school by the refugee pupils get valued in the context of the school and is this cultural knowledge able to be exchanged for cultural capital? Parental involvement could be an important source for the exchange of cultural capital although this project did not find evidence of parental involvement within the schools.

Half of the primary pupils referred to the cultures of their families in their discussions with the researchers. One primary pupil of Sri Lankan origin appeared to have a strong awareness of his cultural identity, discussing religion, food, support for the national cricket team and awareness of political symbols and political activity in Sri Lanka. However it was not apparent that the teachers had an understanding of this pupil's cultural knowledge and it was not translated into valuable cultural capital. A primary pupil of Turkish origin explained that her family were unable to attend a School Show because "We're going to my mum's friend's house for Eid." It seems that opportunities to build cultural capital were denied to this pupil and her family by the school not taking notice of festivals in planning school events. Out of school networks do include members of the indigenous Glasgow community. This same pupil discussed going to a Christmas party in the flat block where she lived. Membership of these networks could impact beneficially within school: "We were buddies so the primary 1's didn't cry when they left their mummies".

Pupils had an abundance of opportunities to participate in a range of social networks as a result of teacher action rather than through their own active agency. This included school committees and groups. The primary head teacher was clear that the Pupil Council had an important place in the school but there was no evidence in any of the pupil discussion of the role of the Pupil Council. A number of voluntary extracurricular activities were organised including music, football, gymnastics, rugby and running. There was little evidence through all of this of the primary school seeking to build bridging capital for the pupils with the wider world outside school. The school organised pupil attendance at sports events, generating social capital opportunities with potential for pupils to operate in "dense" and "open" (cf. *Stone/Gray/Hughes* 2003) networks. However the teacher responsible confirmed that the competitive culture within schools' football was unhelpful to developing relationships and networks. It seemed to be more effective to bring the outside community into the school rather than place pupils within the external environment. A Skills for Work programme was introduced for Primary 6 and 7 pupils, in partnership with local employers, to introduce pupils to "ordinary jobs". Pupils developed their responsibility and skills by preparing questions for the visiting speakers.

Co-operative learning methods, with the emphasis on pupil responsibility for learning, peer learning and flexible grouping of pupils, were regarded by some teachers as appropriate for fostering the required social, emotional, linguistic and cognitive skills. However outwith school there may have been limited opportunities for making sufficient use of these skills to produce bridging social capital. Observation of classes gave evidence to strengthen teachers' views of the value of working in groups, as pupils appeared motivated and on task. The P7 class teacher organised learning deliberately to encourage children to work as team members and share responsibility. Children were grouped to develop skills in working with a diverse range of peers. Pupils had few opportunities to take

decisions regarding choice of work partners. Thus, while co-operative learning enhances the development of social learning skills, it cannot be seen as clear evidence of creating bridging social capital for refugee children with other ethnic or linguistic groups of pupils. Refugee children have particular needs concerning the development of bridging social capital. Without this form of social capital it is questionable how the children will be empowered to operate in the world outside school.

One area where bridging capital appears to be securely established is at the transition from primary to secondary.[5] A Joint Action Team meets to deal with pupil transition to secondary school. Language unit staff from both schools met together informally to discuss the specific needs of refugee pupils. In this context the sharing of expertise continued after transfer, as evidenced by one language teacher*: "After children leave us they [the secondary school] sometimes contact us to ask advice, particularly the [language unit]. We had a recent call about a girl who was in p7 last year. Her mother is ill and there are 4 children still in the Congo. L, the eldest carries a lot of concerns, looking after younger siblings and her teachers think she may benefit from counselling. They are keeping us informed and seeking our opinion."*

Many communities exist where the members have developed high levels of bonding capital and which are marked by mutual trust and solidarity but where there is little in the way of bridging or linking capital; indeed some may be marked by complacency, exclusivity or hostility to outsiders; and some may even be considered anti-social. Schools in our case study make considerable efforts to counter the effects of such limiting models of social capital among groups of pupils. One method is taking action to ensure that all pupils develop the skills required for the development of bridging and linking social capital and affording pupils opportunities to exercise these skills in a range of contexts. The other is to take action to counter directly the impacts of negative bonding capital and to seek to ensure that new members are not drawn into these groups. These two approaches in the context of schools can be roughly equated respectively with teaching and discipline procedures. In this case study the balance of teaching and disciplinary procedures was observed to shift between primary and secondary schooling: as pupils grow older and made the transition from primary to secondary education, the balance between these two types of approach moves from the educational to the disciplinary.

The School Handbook of the primary school studied sets out the vision to promote the shared values of the school community. In the daily life of the school these values were articulated in many ways – written information on posters, art work, pupil/teacher verbal exchanges, pupil/visitor verbal exchanges, school assembly and a range of mutually consistent rewards and sanctions. Observation in class provided evidence that these values were operational but this is a context under the direct control of teaching staff. This control is less evident in the dining hall and playground where observation also confirms that pupils operated within a culture of mutual responsibility and good order. Within the primary school field notes recorded a happy noisy atmosphere in the dining hall where children were clear about procedure and were allowed freedom to choose where to sit. A variety of social groupings was evidenced. One table monitor (a refugee pupil) was observed taking his duties very seriously, reminding one of the younger children to use the plastic cutlery provided and supporting a conversation across two tables between two boys. In the younger children's playground, after lunch, the children were observed playing mostly in small mixed ethnic groups and were co-operating well. The four pupil monitors were closely involved with the children.

For refugee pupils the GASSP units within the mainstream schools provided a close and intimate community where pupils were introduced to school values, trust was established and close friendships flourished. The aim here was to help pupils to gain confidence to participate in and contribute to the wider school community. In addition children were introduced to a pedagogy which regards pupils as active agents in their own learning although this was not always observed to transfer to the mainstream classrooms.

In the GASSP unit of the secondary school the refugee pupils' existing cultural knowledge was valued: the children were encouraged to read internet homepages with news or things they are interested in, in their mother tongue. One day the teacher put one of the children into the position of a tutor leading a group exercise, leaving them to their own devices and only interfering when asked for help. This pedagogy could not happen if there was not a base of trust between the children and the teacher and also between the children. On occasion one child would work on a task and get stuck with a problem asking the question out loud and the whole class would react to this question trying to answer it or telling the child where to find the answer. The diversity of cultural heritage was acknowledged in both schools and the GASSP units played a leading role in sharing cultural knowledge and values. According to the age and emotional security of the pupils, events such as religious festivals and celebrations, children's traditional games, music, and discussion of country of origin and asylum issues, were organised. These events and activities all acted to enable bonding social capital between the pupils. In addition to the secure base afforded by the language units, the school organisation and structures provided opportunities to establish wider pupil networks, with staff encouraging the development of bridging social capital across the school community.

Some instances were observed of successful formal procedures, which promoted linking social capital, by providing pupils with access to organisations and structures outwith the school, e.g. introduction to the world of work. In addition some informal arrangements to support the development of linking social capital were reported, e.g. assistance to access support agencies.

Due to the particular circumstances of the refugee families, as a result of their reasons for arrival in the UK and the subsequent complex demands on the children from these families, social and cultural capital were not the only form of capital with which the project became concerned. While no assumptions can be made about the economic status of any refugee family, it is reasonable to state that in general the economic capital of some of the asylum seeker families is very low since they are not permitted to work and they live on a low weekly allowance. The housing situation may also be a factor that prevented further bridging social capital being developed. In one of the case study schools the majority of the refugee pupils were actually housed outwith the school catchment area. The legal change of status, which comes with the granting of leave to remain, can result in sudden re-housing. This certainly does not aid the sustainability of integrated communities and the development of social capital.

In both case study schools the GASSP units created a space which enabled the children to feel safe and secure and to establish bonding social capital with each other as well as with members of staff. This has advantages particularly given the traumatic experiences of some of the children. In the primary school there was close co-operation between the GASSP unit and the mainstream classes. However in the secondary school the GASSP unit and mainstream classes appeared to find structured co-operation more difficult despite the effort of the teachers involved.

## 5 Conclusions

When considering the overall aim and our conclusions we became clearer about what we had not found out in the research due to time and access limitations and would see these areas as worthy of future research. We were unable to find out about the amount of community social capital in existence in the two areas, i.e. were the communities ones which had existed for generations or ones which were transient and how did this effect the development of social capital of the refugee pupils? We also did not find a great deal of evidence as regards the social capital amongst the teachers in the two schools. We did not attempt to make any connections between social capital and pupil achievement and in fact, apart from anecdotal evidence, did not query pupil achievement. Although we had some interview data concerning parental involvement this was not verifiable by parental data as we did not interview parents. Nor did we seek or find data in this short time scale regarding the parents' own social capital. We could not seek verifiable data about the opportunities to take social capital developed in school into the communities as the research was school bound. The refugee population is mobile, with families changing residence when they are granted Leave to Remain. Other families are detained or deported and some families go into hiding for fear of deportation or detention. We were unable in this research to investigate the effects of this mobility on the sustainability of any social capital practices.

In attempting to draw conclusions from our discussions about what we did find out we return initially to the original research questions:

– *Does the school intentionally operate to develop social capital amongst its pupils from refugee families?*

There is much good practice to develop bonding social capital amongst the pupils from refugee families and other pupils in the school. This was more apparent as a whole school approach in the primary than the secondary school where the main intentional development of social capital seemed to happen in the GASSP Unit. The management changes in the secondary school may have had an impact on this, but this was not possible to ascertain without focused interviews with staff about the impact of change. The primary school provided opportunities for creating a wide range of social networks, but as these resulted from teacher action rather than through the active agency of the pupils, it is difficult to ascertain the impact of these opportunities for sustaining social capital.

– *What forms of social capital are important within the school setting?*

Although the primary school appeared to attempt to develop bridging social capital through skills development, it is questionable whether this is really sufficient. Outwith school the pupils may be prevented from making use of these skills to produce bridging social capital.

In both case study schools positive attempts to develop bridging social capital between communities were obvious. Within the time constraints of the research there did not appear to be a focus on the development of linking social capital, that is, enabling networks and connections for the refugee pupils with more powerful outside agencies, with the exception of some individualised work in the secondary school, as has been discussed in this article. However the primary school senior staff indicated they made

positive attempts to develop linking social capital for parents with outside agencies such as Language classes and offering advice as to where to seek support.

It is arguable whether secondary school is a new context for pupils and therefore whether transition practices build linking social capital – we do not think this is the case. It is also arguable whether visits from outside agencies can truly develop linking social capital: while such visits may provide some knowledge of those with different amounts of power, they can not be said to be linking social capital until such knowledge can be put into use. Similarly, while skills for life teaching provides some potential to develop linking social capital this teaching in itself does not create linking social capital as it has not yet been contextualised or put into use and may never be due to other capital limitations as discussed above.

The effects of bonding social capital are seen in the classroom practices, although these are not always transmitted into whole school practices and there is little evidence it is transmitted beyond the school into bridging and linking in the community. This is not to say it does not happen but further research would be required to establish this.

– *Do other capitals, particularly cultural and economic capitals, operate and interact with social capital development in the school setting?*

In the case of refugee pupils, the children themselves are being helped to develop social capital by the school structures but it is not known whether this will have an effect in a situation of limited cultural and economic capital.

The overall aim of this research was to investigate if and how teachers and the pupils understand social capital and if it impacts on their networks outwith the school and on their families. Teachers in both schools, particularly in the primary school and in the secondary GASSP unit, have clear aims to help the refugee pupils build social relationships and networks. While not necessarily using the term social capital they are certainly making use of a range of practices which build bonding social capital. In exploring the associated concepts with pupils we found an understanding of the importance of friendship and trust, the importance of cultural capital and some of the barriers to building bridging social capital. As we have discussed we were unable to establish clear evidence about the transferability of social capital outside the school.

Given the focus by the Home Office (cf. *Castles* et al. 2002) report on social capital for enabling refugee integration there is clearly more work could be fruitfully conducted in this area into some of the issues mentioned above.

## Notes

1 Exceptional Leave to Remain is a discretionary status allowing temporary permission to stay in the UK.

2 Convention status allows permanent permission to stay in the UK.

3 AERS was a five year programme funded by the Scottish Executive Education Department and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council between 2004 and 2009. AERS aimed to enhance educational research capability in Scottish Higher Education institutions, and to use that capability to conduct high-quality research which would benefit school education in Scotland. The programme was organised in three thematic networks, which carried out capacity-building activities and research projects on, respectively: Learners, Learning and Teaching; School Management and Governance; and Schools and Social Capital. The Schools and Social Capital network identified issues in defining and measuring social capital at the national level, and at the level of an individual school

and reviewed existing policy, theory and research on social capital. The ways in which social capital is used and enhanced by teachers and other professionals may include or exclude people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Current practices and research findings were documented and a pilot case study explored the ways social capital was expressed and identified in schools and in families. These findings were then applied in ten case studies undertaken to address local community issues including the education of refugee pupils.

4 Children in Scotland start school between the ages of 4 years 6 months and 5 years 6 months depending on the date of their 5th birthday. They usually attend primary school for 7 years and secondary school for 4 to 6 years.

5 This transition *from* the primary school is involved in the research; the secondary school to which its pupils proceed is not the secondary school involved in the research.

## References

*AERS Schools and Social Capital Network* (2005): Social Capital Theory: A Review. University of Stirling. – Stirling. http://www.aers.org.uk/dspace/retrieve/16/finalTheoryPaper2.doc; accessed April 15th 2010.

*Ager, A./Strang, A.* (2004): Indicators of integration, final report. – London.

*Bourdieu, P.* (1977): Outline of a Theory of Practice. Translated by Richard Nice. – New York.

*Castles, S/Korac, M./Vasta, E./Vertovec, S.* (2002): Integration: Mapping the Field, Home Office Home Office Online Report 29/03. – London. http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr2803.doc; accessed April 15th 2010.

*Coleman, J.* (1994): Foundations of Social Theory. – Cambridge.

*Field, J.* (2003): Social Capital. – London.

*Furstenberg, F./Hughes, M.* (1995): Social capital and successful development among at-risk youth. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57, 3, pp. 580-592.

*Halpern*, *D.* (2005): Social Capital, Polity Press. – Cambridge.

*Jones, A.* (2004): Involving Children and Young People as Researchers. In: *Fraser*, S./*Lewis*, *V./Ding, S./Kellet, M./Robinson, C.* (Eds.): Doing Research with Children and Young people. – London/New Delhi, pp. 113-130.

*Mayall*, B. (2000): Conversations with Children: Working with Generational Issues. In: *Christensen*, *P./James, A.* (Eds.) Research with Children. Perspectives and Practices. – London/New York, pp. 120-135.

*Morrow, V.* (2005): Ethical Issues in Collaborative Research with Children. In: *Farrel*, *A.* (Ed.): Ethical Research with Children. – Maidenhead, pp. 150-165.

*Putnam*, *R.* (1996): Who Killed Civic America? Prospect, March, pp. 66-72.

*Rutter*, *Jill* (2006): Refugee Children in the UK. – Maidenhead.

*Smyth*, *G.* (2006): Bilingual learners' perspectives on school and society in Scotland. In: *Jeffrey*, *B.* (Ed.): Creative learning practices: European experiences. – London pp. 63-86.

*Stead*, *J/Closs*, *A./Arshad*, *R.* (1999): Refugee Pupils in Scottish Schools, Spotlight Publication 74, Vol. 23, pp. 40-46.

*Stone, W./Gray, M./Hughes, J.* (2003): Social capital at work: How family, friends and civic ties relate to labour market outcomes Research Paper No. 31, Australian Institute of Family Studies. – Melbourne.

*Yan, W.* (1999): Successful African American students: The role of parental involvement. Journal of Negro Education, 68, 1, pp. 5-22.